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Twentieth Century Interpretation of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

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TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATION

OF

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

BY

H. R. BENDER, D. D.

PRESS OF
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PREFACE.

This book is made up of a series of ten sermons upon Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, in which an honest effort is made to give a rational interpretation to these Scriptures. They are published at the solicitation and by the aid of those who heard them. The author is aware that interpretations of this Epistle have changed greatly with the advancing years. Each generation comes to Paul with new questions, growing out of an advanced civilization, and a more profound study of the Bible, of psychology and kindred sciences. With a desire to comply with the request of my friends, and in the hope that these interpretations may be open windows for the reader in this Temple of Truth, they have been put into this form.

H. R. BENDER.

Pastor of Trinity M. E. Church,
Lock Haven, Pa., September 22, 1905.

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I.

RECIPROCAL BLESSINGS

"*Blessed be the God . . . who hath blessed us.*"—Eph. 1, 4.

We usually think of Paul as a debater, a lover of controversy, and full of argument. He is the apostle who made preparation for conflict by putting on "the whole armor of God;" then fought "the good fight" to the finish and to victory; and then, in the consciousness of duty well done, passed into glory to receive "a crown." Paul's Epistles reveal that this spirit of conflict was made manifest in his manner of life, in his preaching, and in his writing. This spirit in him has provided the Christian Church with scriptures of an everlasting resisting power against all enemies.

However, in this "afternoon Epistle" Paul invites us into the quiet retreats of meditation.

He leads us from the hostilities of an embittered controversy into the quiet retreat and harmonies of God's own temple; a temple not built with wood and stone, but a temple of Divine Truth, whose foundation is "the Rock of Ages," whose walls are "salvation," whose gates are "praise," whose pillars are eternal verities, whose drapery is wisdom in folds of beauty, whose roof is the love of God, whose illumination is the lamp of life, and whose glories are "the riches of His grace" in Christ Jesus. The spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God carries him upward in sacred association with the revealing Christ, until Christ's vision becomes Paul's vision, until God's thought becomes Paul's thought, and God's way becomes Paul's way. The provoking spirit of controversy has passed away, his Jewish prejudices have disappeared, and the inhibitions of his carnal nature have been overcome, so that Paul is free to interpret the truths of this new revelation as truths of his own religious consciousness.

If we will only give ourselves up to his direction, he will carry our vision of Divine truth far in advance of Jewish revelations, that were once Paul's heritage. At that time Paul saw God as "the Most High" of all gods; "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;" "the True God," in contrast with false gods; "the Living God," in contrast with dead gods; "the God of Israel," in contrast with the gods of the Gentiles; but now God is no longer the Most High of all gods; He is the only God. Paul used to strengthen his faith by saying, "Abrabam our Father," but now he says "God our Father." And "Our God and Father" is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," by whom, and in whom, and through whom, we now have access into the Holy of Holies. The text is a lamp of life, a radiating center, placed at the altar of this Temple, revealing its harmonies, and the relations that are maintained between the worshiper and his God. It reveals

I. *A Reciprocal Relation between us and "our God."*

Activities are not all on one side. As the flower responds to the kiss of the sunbeam, opens its face, wafts its perfume to the rising sun, so do we, in response to the blessings of heaven, waft back our adoration, our reverence, our praise. Under this inspiration, David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." This expression of adoration, of reverence, or of praise is used in the Old Testament one hundred and sixty-three times. In those days this spirit of reciprocity found its usual expression in utterances of the lips, by using the Psalms of the sanctuary as we use our hymns; but the New Testament insists that this reciprocity shall find expression in action and in life. Jesus illustrates it with his parable of the Vine and the Branch. The Vine blesses the Branch with the vital current it pours into it, and the Branch blesses the Vine with the blossoms it yields and the fruit it carries. The blossoms

throw off their fragrance as incense, the symbol of our prayer. The harvest of the Branch blesses the Vine, as Christian character, wrought out by the Holy Spirit, blesses God. The quality and quantity of the Branch-harvest determines that the Vine shall be prolonged in the earth. So does the Christlike character in us determine that the Church shall retain its place of power in the earth. It is in this deep and vital sense that Paul would bless God.

II. *God has blessed us with all Spiritual Blessings.*

1. When Paul said to the Philippians that for Christ he had suffered the loss of all things, his mind's eye looked in the opposite direction from that indicated by the text. And when Paul wrote about the desertion of his brethren, expressed his gratitude that Onesiphorus had "often refreshed" him, asked that his Roman prison might be made more comfortable by the cloak that he had lett at Troas, his mind was shadowed by the loss of material blessings.

Here Paul might have given us a striking picture of the value of material blessings by their loss, but his mind soars away to the spiritual realm of life, in which is revealed the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ Jesus, until the loss of the material disappears in the glory of spiritual. Forgiveness, and adoption, and redemption, and being raised up into heavenly places and privileges with Christ Jesus by the riches of God's mercy, and because of the great love wherewith God "loved us," is as though the riches of heaven had been substituted for the riches of earth, and the glory of the material was not worthy to be compared with the glory of the spiritual life. Paul would have us know these spiritual blessings, not by contrast, but by assimilation; by so appropriating these blessings as, by them, to be transformed into creatures of higher aspirational energy. Then, by an experimental certainty, the joy of the higher will dwarf the joy of the lower life; the beauty of the spiritual will transcend the beauty of the material;

the glory of the inspirational life will shadow the glory of the mechanical; then we shall live not by contrasting conditions, but by inspirational activity.

2. Paul does not mean that God simply pronounces benedictions upon us, but that He regenerates our nature, imparts a Divine enrichment to our life in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of revelation in the knowledge of God.

As a Jew, Paul had gone to the high priest for this blessing, but amid the shadows of those earlier times there was the consciousness of distance, the uncertainty of a feeble priestly administration, and the necessity of ceremonial propriety that made the blessing but little more than a priestly benediction. Here Paul has gone past the old high priest, past the altar of sacrifice, past the uncertainties of the priestly ordinance, and past the altar of material incense into the Holy of Holies, and is in the very presence of God, face to face with the risen Christ. Here Paul learns that God's

blessing is more than a benediction, and more than a mere cordial recognition. He learns that it means the enthronement of Christ Himself in the human heart, as a new spiritual energy that clarifies the human conscience, that purifies motive, that quickens aspiration, that imparts mental and spiritual vision, that gives to human nature a new moral quality, that reveals the riches of our inheritance in Him, and the riches of His inheritance in us.

He says, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." (Gal. i, 15, 16). Why does He not say "to me?" If Paul had simply stood before Jesus as I stand before you, or if Jesus had simply spoken to Paul's intellect, he would have written, "It pleased God to reveal His Son *to me*." He says "in me," because Christ has entered into his life as a Divine spiritual energy that converted his body into the temple of God.[1] The lowing beasts of passion have been driven forth, the mercenary spirit of

[1]Paul never represents the revelation of God as the exhibition of an abstract idea, but as the unfolding of a Divine operation. (The Apostle Paul, Sabatier, p. 238.)

merchandise has yielded to new moral convictions, and aspiration is rewarded by higher and better living. The spirit of rebellion against God has been conquered by the Prince of Peace, and the spirit of alienation has given place to the spirit of adoption. In this spiritual lifetide Paul says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Christ has the right of way in me; has taken possession of me as a Divine inspiration, to whom I say, Thy will, not mine, be done." Jesus had prayed (John xvii, 21), "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us." Paul says (1 Cor. vi, 17), "He that is joined unto the Lord [or adheres steadfastly to the Lord] is one spirit." The spirit of the one is the spirit of the other. This seems to be the deepest and sublimest truth of Paul's religious consciousness. It is the bedrock upon which all his Christian teaching rests. Here our Lord's Prayer is answered, and Jesus, John, and Paul stand together upon the sublimest heights of revealed truth.

3. Paul had been taught to regard life as a sacred trust. Being blessed with privileges, he was also confronted with duties. His possibilities implied responsibilities. To him life had a Divine purpose. He had tried to discover this purpose, that he might place his energies under Divine guidance. With this motive he had sought the direction of Moses, of David, and of the prophets; but, under the influence of poor teachers, they had led him upon the wrong road. When Paul discovered his error he was face to face with the risen Christ, and cried out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" God now blesses Paul, in Christ Jesus, not by having Jesus perform the office of the old high priest, but by making Christ, first, the source of a new spiritual vitality; and, second, by making Christ to be Paul's interpreter of His Divinely appointed mission. As Interpreter, Christ revealed the Gospel to Paul. (Gal. i, 12; Acts ix, 20.) Then Christ revealed to Paul his life-work. (Acts xxii, 21.) After this, the Holy Spirit

secured for Paul the moral and material support of the Church. (Acts xiii, 2.) Finally, the Holy Spirit directed Paul in his mission. (Acts xvi, 6, 7.) It follows that the highest ends of human life come to us by revelation; that God blesses us in Christ Jesus with interpretations of life's divine import; and that our life attains to its highest and holiest end when we live to accomplish God's revealed purpose.

4. In this Epistle, Paul clearly shows that God blesses us, in Christ Jesus, with mighty saving power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to heaven. Peter's famous declaration, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12), used to appear extravagant to me. I wished that it read "may be saved." I expected the revisers of the New Testament to change it, but they were compelled to retain it. Then it dawned upon me that this is not Peter's opinion of man's privilege, but God's revelation of saving power; that it means that wherever

there is a man who with repentance and faith turns to the Lord, there God says, "This man must be saved;" that there is no power on earth or hell that can defeat God's redemptive purpose in Christ Jesus. I may be the slave of habit, and possessed of devils; my depravities may have prostrated me to the dust; but I have turned to this World Saviour, "who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him," and although vile men object and devils protest, God says, "This man must be saved." Wherefore, "Blessed be the God who has blessed us."

II.

SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"*In whom ye also hoped, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*"—EPH. I, 13.

PAUL is a converted Jew. His Jewish ancestry, mode of living, education, and knowledge of Jewish traditions enable him to understand the Jewish Christian embarrassments of faith and of association with Gentile converts. In many places the distinction between Jewish converts and Gentile converts was maintained. By these Jewish converts the Gentile converts were regarded, in an important sense, as outside of Israel. The unity of the Church is here set forth to correct that error.* If from

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See Weiss, "The Religion of the New Testament," p. 397.

verses 4 to 12 we will understand Paul to use the personal pronouns, "we" and "us" as referring to Jews, and read Christ as meaning Messiah, it seems to me that we shall be rewarded with Paul's thought, and his statements will be in perfect accord with history. These verses will then read, "God hath chosen us [Jews] in Him before the foundation of the world, that we [Jews] should be holy before Him in love: having predestinated us [Jews] unto the adoption of children by [Messiah] Jesus Christ; having made known unto us [Jews] the mystery of His will . . . that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in [Messiah] Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: in whom also we [Jews] have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated . . . that we [Christian Jews] should be to the praise of His glory, who first hoped in Christ [as the Messiah] in whom ye [Gentiles] also hoped, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom

having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

I. The text brings us to the boundary-line between the Old and the New Testaments; to that point where God's redemptive purpose passes beyond the boundary of a race to include all races. The Jewish Messiah becomes the world-wide Saviour. The riches of the Jewish inheritance are now to be lavishly bestowed upon the Gentile world. Until this point of revealed truth was gained, Paul saw Gentiles to be "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. ii, 12); but now this distance, alienation, and hopelessness have given place to the same adoption and heirship for the Gentile as for the Jew, to the praise of God's glory, and as a witness to the unity of Christian faith and life.

Paul remembers how his Jewish education had once blinded his eyes; how their doctrine of election had shut the Gentiles out; and how he at first longed to preach Christ as Messiah

to the Jewish Church. It required the command of God, supported by a direct revelation, to send him forth to the Gentile world. At first he was uncertain as to the world-wide purpose of the risen Christ, and then as to the effect of the Gospel upon the Gentile conscience; but he learned that the word of Christ was imperative, and that the Holy Spirit was imparted to Gentiles as to Jews; that God made no distinction on account of race, but purified the hearts of both alike (Acts xv, 8, 9); that the Holy Spirit in the Gentile heart wrought a "carefulness" in conduct, an "indignation" against wrong-doing, and a "vehement desire" to do right in the sight of God. (2 Cor. vii, 11.) Paul then gladly hurried back to Jerusalem to report to his Jewish brethren "the conversion of the Gentiles" (Acts xv, 3), the unity of the Church, and the harmony of the new revelation with the old.

II. The Jews, who were first called, based their hope of the Messiah upon the predictions

of their prophets and their doctrine of predestination, but the Gentiles owe their hope of the Messiah to hearing "the Word of truth," "the Gospel of their salvation," and faith in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of men. Paul's doctrine of election comes into harmony with his teaching of man's free moral agency only by its being understood as an election to opportunity, and not an election unto an unconditional destiny. The Jews were at the first God's elect, "foreordained unto the adoption of sons through the Messiah" (verse 5); but, having missed their opportunity, the Gentiles take their place. Sabatier has placed us under obligation for his observations upon this point. He declares that the keystone to the arch of Paul's teaching is in Romans xi, 28–32, where Paul says: "As touching the Gospel the Jews are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. . . . For as ye [Gentiles] in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their [the Jews] dis-

obedience, even so have these [Jews] also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you [Gentiles] they [the Jews] may also obtain mercy. . . . For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all." Wherefore Paul says, "There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii, 22, 23.) Again he writes, "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him: for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x, 12, 13.) This is Paul's Gospel of salvation to the whole world; that "Word of truth" that will conduct us into the experiences of Divine Sonship now, and into an eternal heirship hereafter.

"*The Word of Truth.*"—The truth is here determined by its efficiency rather than by its philosophy. In sickness, we say that is the true remedy that effects a cure. In mechanics, we say that is the true machine that runs true to the principles of the art.

In society, that is the true life that conforms to those laws that vitalize and maintain it. So, in the moral and spiritual realm, we should declare the "word of truth" to be that word that is true to man's highest necessities; that word that conducts us to the higher ranges of life, where we become "partakers of the Divine nature;" where we may rejoice that our feet are upon the mountain, and that our "conversation is in heaven." Somehow, this word awakens virtue and destroys vice; breaks the power of evil habit, and sets aspiration free; dethrones love of wickedness, and enthrones the love of righteousness; lifts the shadows of ignorance, and quickens mental action. It is the word that carries us up out of despair into hope, out of skepticism into faith, out of weakness into power, out of defeat into victory, out of self into the inspirations of God. Peter here meets us, and says: "Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." (1 Pet. i, 22.) Judged, therefore, by

what it does, this Gospel stands forth as "the word of truth."

3. "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

Among Christ's last words to His disciples, He said: "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye heard of Me; for John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." (Acts i, 4–5.) The fulfillment of this promise was recognized by the apostles at Pentecost. From that date the Holy Spirit was the supreme witness of the Divine presence and blessing; gave Divine sanction to the prayer service in the home of Cornelius; blessed with Divine efficiency the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, and became recognized as the efficient agent in regeneration, sanctification and redemption.

The seal is an official stamp to confirm the contract, to protect a treasure, or to ratify a title. This official stamp upon commercial paper gives it right of way in business circles. The Israelites were sealed Jews of the Covenant

by circumcision, like we stamp sheep or cattle or horses; but Paul here finds the stamp of God upon man's moral and spiritual consciousness. It is a ratification of our Divine sonship by an impartation of the Holy Spirit. God's attestation to our being the children of God by regeneration is in the witness that His Spirit bears with our spirit that we have passed from death unto life, and from the power of evil into the power of righteousness. The time was when a Jew established His descent from Abraham by his record of heredity, but Jesus insisted that it be made a record of character; that resemblance to the spirit of Abraham should stamp the sons of Abraham. To impress the same truth, Paul writes that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly," neither is circumcision of the flesh the mark required by this Gospel, but that the Spirit of God, as the controlling power in human conduct, is God's stamp of the man. Wherefore Paul adds, "If any man [Jew or Gentile] have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom.

viii, 9.) You may understand the Spirit of Christ to refer to His disposition, His temper, His tone in social intercourse, and His poise before a sinful world; and this may be interpreted as God's seal upon Divine Sonship. We will most clearly show to the world that we have been with Christ and are partakers of His Divine nature, when our disposition resembles His. This spirit becomes the earnest of our inheritance. It is God's sample, that interprets all that is to follow. Instead of studying the life of Christ by its contrasts from our own, we begin to appreciate resemblances, aim at likeness, until the inferior traits of character have gone into an eclipse, because the divinity of redeemed manhood shines forth. These conquests of the Spirit are prophecies that proclaim possibilities, samples of realities that beautify and enrich our life here, and will glorify it hereafter.

III.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS.

"*For this cause I . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that God . . . may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.*"—Eph. i, 15, 19.

The curtain of the inner sanctuary is here drawn aside to let us see the apostle's burden for the Church, as her intercessor before God. We have seen him in the presence of God on his own account, have heard his prayer for himself; but here we see him, in forgetfulness of himself, occupied with our interests and

making our prayer. This prayer is a revelation of those things that we should pray for; a revelation of aspirations that should possess us, and of values that should enrich us. Here Paul becomes our guide in the land of promise. We shall gain in clearness of perception by confining our study to four petitions.

I. "*That God may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened.*"

Philosophy says, "Know thyself," and then from thyself as a radiating center know the universe; but Revelation says, "Know God," and from Him, as the radiating center, get interpretations of thyself and of the universe. Peter writes (2 Pet. i, 2), "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, seeing that His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him." If this knowledge be impossible, then New Testament revelation is a failure, for Jesus says, "This is life eternal, that they

should know Thee, the only true God." (John xvii, 3.) When Peter saw Jesus to be the Son of God in the sense of Messiah, Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." And after His disciples had beheld Christ's glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Paul's conviction is that we come by this knowledge through an enlightened heart. We had supposed that it came by way of an enlightened head, as other knowledge comes. What, therefore, does Paul mean by an "enlightened heart?" Olshausen observes that "the Scriptures never conceive of the active exercise of the thinking faculty apart from the inclinations and bent of a man's whole life." The heart is the seat, not merely of the affections and emotions, but also of our moral sentiment, and these determine our dispositions and character as to purity, sincerity, fidelity,

perverseness, obduracy, and shading of thought. When the Scriptures, therefore, speak of "the thoughts of the heart," they seem to refer to those thoughts that have gained control of the man, have been translated into inclinations or dispositions that find expression in words and actions. Enlightened eyes of the heart are seen in affections that are justified by wisdom, in dispositions that have come from wise culture, or in moral sentiments that dignify manhood. If a man will come to prayer with this heart culture, he is prepared to profit by a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It is this enlightenment, or its absence, that determines a man's inclination toward the knowledge of God. With this preparation we may know God. How? We may first know God in the consciousness of right from wrong when the word "ought" represents a Divine authority to be over us. We recognize God when we hear the voice of duty, and bow in obedience to its supreme authority. We know God in the conviction

for sin; when conscience revolts against the ordinary course of our life, because God has revealed a better course. We also know God in the pardon of sin, when conscience changes from a voice of reproach into a voice of peace, and the agitations of sorrow give place to the inspirations of joy. We then know God in that quickened mental action that is rewarded by Divine revelation, in a new moral quality that fixes inclination, and in an awakened spiritual energy that gives to life a new and wider range. We know God as we become partakers of the Divine nature, and become expressions of a Christlike character. Now Paul prays that we may be given a spirit, or disposition of wisdom. With this disposition, if any man lack wisdom he is to ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. No matter how far down the hill he may begin, if he be inclined to wisdom from an appreciation of its value, God treats that man as a hopeful case.

"The spirit of revelation" is a rarer quality

of mind, that makes a man the medium of Divine truth. We sometimes call it spiritual insight that sees truth in the Scriptures that other minds do not see; that spirit that searches the deep things of God as we search the deep mines of the earth. One day, in Auburn Theological Seminary, I listened to a lecture on "Paul, the Traveler," by a professor of the University of Aberdeen. At the close I left the hall in company with the Professor of New Testament Exegesis. He remarked, "Isn't it astonishing what that man sees that we have missed? How he reads between and beneath the lines until Paul's thoughts breathe and live again!" He had spiritual insight. This spirit of revelation gets hold of these revealed truths as easily as the spirit of skepticism gets hold of doubts. Some men have it for a time, and then lose it. Some preachers have it, and others have it not. We may all have it if will pay the price.

II. "*That ye may know what is the hope of His calling.*"

Hope is Faith's vision of the future. Hope and Faith are the two poles that ensphere Christian activity. Faith is at the starting point which Paul has already recognized, and Hope is at the goal. Faith has to do with God's Word as truth, but Hope has to do with God's Word as a promise. Faith contends for doctrine, but Hope for reward. Faith supports Jacob's ladder at the base, but Hope supports it at the top. Faith invites you to look at the rock beneath your feet, but Hope directs your attention to the prospect over your head. Faith bids you to stand and hold your ground, but Hope bids you to hasten to grasp the possibilities of achievement. In Paul's mind we have been secured by Faith, and now he would have us gather into our lives the inspiration of Hope. Paul prays that we may see the possibilities for us that God sees: that the Divine vision may be our vision. Paul seems to pray for this because he remembers its power over him-

self when he determined that he would not be disobedient "to the heavenly vision." It continues to exert a marvelous control over his life. It vitalizes the promises of God; paints a rainbow upon the dark, threatening clouds of human life; becomes the Christian's night companion, carrying a lamp that the storms of this world can not extinguish. It is in this sense that Paul says, "We are saved by hope." Paul therefore prays that we may know the meaning and value of Hope's sacred ministry.

III. "*That ye may know what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*"

We are apt to think of our inheritance in the kingdom of God, but Paul here directs our attention to God's inheritance, or possession in us. As a Jew, Paul had often reflected upon the lofty character of the sons of Abraham. From his youth he had studied the great deeds of the fathers; studied the characters of the patriarchs, priests, kings and prophets from the standpoint of patriotic admiration and reverence. He had seen God's chosen people to

be the choicest of all races upon the earth; rich in material possessions, rich in laws, rich in literature, and rich in the products of Divine inspiration. But now, with the eyes of a prophet, Paul sees God's expanding possessions in the Gentile world; that the Gentiles, being called of God, born anew, and sealed unto redemption by the Holy Spirit, become a richer possession as the sons of God than were the Jews as the sons of Abraham. Ulhorn ("Conflict of Christianity with Paganism") quotes Ennius, a pagan Greek, as saying, "I believe that there are gods in heaven, but I affirm that they do not concern themselves about the human race." Now, place beside this declaration John iii, 16, "God so loved the world [this wicked world, this lost world, this world of depraved manhood], that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is evident that God sees values in human life that paganism never sees. We become discouraged and little in our own eyes.

Our disposition is to exaggerate our difficulties and to depreciate our advantages. We see prospects of failure when we ought to see and improve opportunities for success. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a sincere and upright man, that there is none like him in all the earth?" The devil contends that his righteousness is a purchased quality; that if God will deprive him of his property and prosperity, Job will curse God and die. After Job has endured this test to the last degree; after he has been deserted by his friends and kindred and discouraged by his infirmities, and distressed by the aspersions cast upon his character until he wishes that the day might perish in which he was born, God speaks and says, "Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee and declare thou unto Me." (Job xxxviii, 3.) Job had lost sight of his inherent manhood, but God had not. This is the miracle of grace that angels desire to to look into. Here is a poor, stricken, broken-down sinner, without friends, without good

reputation, without business or social standing. We say that God's possession is lost in that man, but at last God raises him up from the dust, bids him stand upright like a man, as He did John Bunyan, because God has a mission for him, and will reveal the riches of the glory of His inheritance in that man whom this world shuts up in jail.

IV. "*That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.*"

This is the climax of Paul's prayer. God's promises are not to disappoint us, nor is a divinely inspired hope going to deceive us, because God's power of redemption is in all, through all, and over all. I understand Paul to use the word power here in the sense of active energy. It appears in the vine as growth, in man's body as health, in pursuit as enthusiasm, in moral conviction as courage, in action as efficiency. Christ's living was a demonstration of spiritual vitality. His spiritual energy withstood the "contradiction of sinners

against Himself," endured the cross, despised the shame, descended into the under world, vanquished death, brought Him again from the dead, then exalted Him at the right hand of God as the Prince of Peace and the Saviour of men. Paul prays that we may know the exceeding greatness of this same power toward us. It is revealed in Christ, not for exhibition purpose, but for its saving use. It is to be ours, not simply to look at and admire, but to appropriate. As we become partakers of the Divine nature, Christ's power of life becomes our power. The Divinity that was operative in Him becomes operative in us, and Christ in us becomes the hope of our living hereafter.

Instead of using this power as we use steam or electricity, we become its instruments, the instruments of a Divine vital energy. When Jesus returned from the Jordan "in the power of the Spirit," He had become the instrument of that Spirit. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed

Me,"—"has made Me the instrument of Messianic efficiency." We attain to it, not by self-assertion, but by self-surrender. It is Divine strength made perfect in human weakness, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv, 7.)

IV.

MEANING OF SALVATION.

"*Ye have been saved.*"—Eph. ii, 5.

In these words the second chapter culminates. Step by step Paul has ascended to this summit, and from it he surveys the exceeding riches of our inheritance in Christ Jesus. He does not say, "Ye can or will in the end be saved, or ye are in process of being saved," but the work has been done, the earnest of the Spirit has been imparted, and the seal of the Holy Ghost is upon the work. Herein he is in harmony with Jesus, who says, "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." (John v, 24.)

I. *Paul's meaning of Salvation is developed in this chapter.*

He does not mean that you have been saved like a farmer saves his crops, by harvesting them and conveying them to shelter; nor saved as a shepherd saves his sheep, by placing them within the security of a fold; nor saved as a governor saves a prisoner from death by a pardon, that leaves the nature of the criminal unchanged; but Paul treats the conditions of unsaved men as results of moral character, and it then follows that their transition from a lost to a saved condition is a transition in character. In that time "ye walked according to the course of this world" in obedience to the prince of the power of the air; "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." This "prince of the power of the air" has been interpreted as meaning the "devil" (an easy way to get rid of it), but Beck's interpretation appeals to me as being much nearer the truth. He says: "The power of the air is a fitting designation for the prevailing spirit of

the times. It manifests itself in a contagious nature-power. It takes possession of individuals and society, and assumes the direction of both." This spirit of the times that determines worldly manners and customs; that creates sentiment for a whole community, town, city or state; that forbids moral sentiment to rise higher than to half-tide; that embarrasses reform and claims the right of license—this is the spirit that once controlled and molded us. We all once lived in this spirit of the times, seeking the demands of the flesh and of a carnal mind. The character of our activity as to motive and destiny was determined by this spirit, or public sentiment. We were members of the tribe and moved with the tribe. The world still moves in crowds, thinks in crowds, acts in crowds. These crowds reveal the currents of public sentiment or spirit.

At that time, as Gentiles, we were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. What

interest does an unsaved Gentile take in the commonwealth of Israel, and in His covenants of promise? To him Israel has only a local and race meaning. He has not taken in its larger meaning, that gives this commonwealth a world-wide range. Lack of interest grows into alienation, and alienation from that covenant leaves him without a prophetic vision of the coming Messiah, and without that hope inspired by prophecy. The Jews are without Christ because they rejected Him, but we are without Christ because we became alienated from Him. The more completely the spirit of the world ruled us, the more securely did the spirit of alienation determine our Christless condition. This principle holds to this day.

At that time "Ye were dead in sins" (verse 5), had no consciousness of that inspirational life that Christ reveals. Wherefore Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life," and adds, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John

xvii, 3.) Here life, and the consciousness of life, go together. Both Jesus and Paul seem to regard a man alive only to the limit of his consciousness; beyond that limit he is dead. It is to the lower forms of life that the higher ranges of consciousness are denied. Under the care of the State we have Institutes for the feeble minded. It is one of nature's merciful provisions that as we pass down to the rank of degenerates, our moral and spiritual consciousness diminishes or passes away. This accounts for the contentment of degenerates in their sad condition. They are dead to the higher ranges of life. Our consciousness of life is entirely foreign to them. If we, like Cato's slaves, had grown up with cattle; had been compelled to feed with them by day and sleep in their stalls by night, then we had lived but a little distance beyond the cattle's range of life. We would have been dead to the life of the family and of the home; dead to the life of the school and the Church; dead to all the higher and holier sanctities of human life. Only to the

extent that we live out of animal instinct into a life of reflection; out of a life of appetite into a life of inspiration; out of a life of animal impulse into a life of meditation and prayer; out of a life actuated by the spirit of human prudence into a life quickened by the Spirit of God—do we enter into the higher ranges of consciousness and of life. "All that we believe without us, we first feel within us; and it is the one sufficient proof of the grandeur and awfulness of our nature that we have faith in God, for no merely finite being can possibly believe the infinite. The universe of which each man conceives, exists primarily in his own mind; there dwells the angel that he enthrones in the height and the demon he covers with the deep; and vainly would he talk of shunning hell who never felt its fires in his own bosom, or he converse of heaven whose soul was never pure and green as Paradise."—(James Martineau.) To the man who dwells in the swamps of materialism, the spiritual man seems

to be dwelling in the clouds. To the materialist there are no realities in regeneration, in Divine inspiration or in prayer, because these experiences find no place in his life. He can not know these higher realities of life until they become a part of his own, and interpret the states of his own consciousness. This elevation from the lower to the higher forms of consciousness, is the new birth. "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Rom. viii, 6.) Paul outlines this transition from death unto life, when he says, "And you hath God quickened with Christ" (verse 5), "and hath raised us up with Him" (verse 6), "and made us sit with Him in the heavenlies [places, blessings, experiences] in Christ Jesus" (verse 6).

II. *For Good Works.*

We thought that we had been saved for heaven, and sang about reading our title clear to mansions in the skies, but Paul says that we have been blessed with this new creation in Christ Jesus "for good works."

"Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 't were all alike
As if we had them not."

"Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Church was commanded to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto God had called them.

V.

PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER.

"*For this cause I bow myself unto the Father . . . that He would grant . . . that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts . . . to the end that . . . ye may apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.*"—Eph. iii, 14–19.

In every age the voice of intercession has ascended to the Throne of God. In every age men and women, with burdens not their own, have sought the aid of the Most High. Patriarchs, kings, priests, prophets, apostles, fathers and mothers, in their turn, have ascended the mountain of intercession, and with an eloquence

inspired by the necessities of others, have poured forth touching petitions in the presence of God. These efforts reveal not only the unselfishness of the intercessor, but they show him to be weighted down with the consciousness of a deathless responsibility. He has passed from the degrading power of selfishness into the elevating power of unselfishness. He has become the instrument of that Divine Spirit that seeks not its own; that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, because it will not see the necessity of failure. This power of Divinity commands him, uses him, controls him. For this reason he appears now at his best; selfishness has disappeared, the lower values of human life are lost to sight, and the higher values receive a consideration that is worthy the admiration of angels. Our study of such prayers should yield values as imperishable as life; values that can find no earthly measurements. Their enrichment of life here becomes a prophecy of life's glory hereafter.

The Motive Current.—Paul reveals to us the motive current that floats this prayer. To the intent that "Ye may perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (verse 4), "To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery" (verse 9), "To the intent that this manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the Church" (verse 10), "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you" (verse 13), "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father." The cause is cumulative. The acquisitions of an illuminated understanding, revealing the dispensations of Divine grace that are to be made known to the world by the Church, is one motive; and that the tribulations of his own apostleship may not develop a weakness in the Church that will invite defeat, is the other. The first would realize for the Church the visions of the prophet, and the second would realize the enduring qualities of the apostle. The two motives would supplement the ignorance of men with the wisdom of God, and the frailties of men with the power of

God, that to the Church her ideal life might be her real life. These motives carry him upward until he stands with Moses upon the mount; with Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, and with Jesus upon the threshold of the Garden (John xvii), where prayer is the voice of Divine inspiration, no longer held in check by human infirmities, but set free by the power of a new affection. The prayer is—

I. "*That the Father would grant that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man.*"

Then there is an inward and an outward man; a man of the Spirit and a man of the flesh. (2 Cor. iv, 16.) Paul's great solicitude is for this inward man. The outward man can be easily strengthened by a system of athletics, but the inward man is a creature of finer quality and slower growth, and requires a higher form of culture. In the apostle's mind this culture is provided by pureness and by knowledge, by longsuffering and by kindness; by the Holy Ghost and by love unfeigned; by

the word of truth and by the power of God. (2 Cor. vii, 6.) The results are an inspirational range to the mental faculty, an elevation of the affections from the low to the high, from the mean to the holy, from the carnal to the spiritual, from the merely human to the Divine realm of life; that enforcement of the will that changes it from a feeble and vacillating servant of fleshly impulse into a steadfast and heroic support of the conscience. When this inward man, this personality of reason, conscience, affection and will is strengthened, then the man becomes a moral and spiritual force among his fellows, a man of moral weight and influence, molding other men and creating sentiment. This blesses the Church with men who have the courage of their convictions; with men who are true for truth's sake; do right because it is right; avoid wrong because it is wrong. Their eye being single, their whole body is full of light. Their reliance being truth, their testimony is full of power.

Their affections being pure, their counsels are full of comfort.

II. "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts to the end that ye may apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.*"

We may think of Christ as a mere Teacher, and receive His instructions; or we may think of Him as an Ideal, and imitate His virtues; or we may think of Him as a beloved Brother, and submit to His influence; but Paul defines Him to be "a quickening Spirit" (1 Cor. xv, 45) that enables the apostle to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii, 20.)

When Paul prays that this "quickening Spirit" may dwell in you, he uses the word that means, not an occasional visit, as though Christ were a stranger, but a continued residence, which implies that this Divinity has become identified with your life as a perpetual source of inspiration.

Paul might have prayed that Christ dwell in your minds as a doctrine, and then have sent you to school; or as an authority, and then have placed you under discipline; but Paul would admit Christ to the most sacred department of your life, to the holy of holies that forbids the intrusion of strangers, and yields its shelter only to its trusted friends. It seems to me that by this residency Paul was thinking of Christ as an inspirational energy, that from this center should bless, not only your worship, but all forms of Christian activity. Let us think of Christianity as your business in the world. In your ordinary business there are many people you hold aloof, keep them upon the outer border of your business life and business methods. Only a choice few are admitted into the heart of your business. This prayer would have Christ dwell at the very heart of your business activities. There you need Him to purify motive, to suppress selfishness, and to stimulate charity; to guard you against the

approach of dishonor and dishonesty; to secure the constant presence of honor and honesty, of truth and virtue, of the wisdom and power of God.

This possibility lies in our faith—attitude toward Christ; faith as a spirit of trust that blossoms into confidence and develops true, genuine friendship between two parties. Each trusts the other because each has implicit confidence in the other. In this relation Christ becomes that Friend who indorses your note at the Bank of Heaven; that Friend who bails you out of hell until the judgment day; that Divinity that stands by you when all other friends have deserted you; that ministry of Brotherhood that abides when earthly brothers have forgotten the meaning of the word.

You would have me place my reliance upon natural laws, but that reliance means "mere mental expectation," and is not trust. "Natural law is a blind force that can take but one direction and show me no preference," but in Christ I find a "moral repose," "a fidelity of

will" that secures to me the promises of God. James Martineau says: "A person is greater than a thing; and if while we are persons the ultimate power of the universe is not a person, it is then WE that are supreme; and if reverence be possible to us at all it must seek its object, not in nature without, but in the self-conscious spirit within. This, however, is simply impossible; no man can venerate himself, and the mere fact that the human heart instinctively cries aloud for leave to worship and to trust, and can not do so without an outer and a higher being, irresistibly proclaims the personal and living God." "The imperishable conviction that if a thing is right it will have to be, is the underlying rock on which all great character is built, and it carries in it a trust, implicit, if not explicit, in the moral government of the world." Christ insures to me the ministry of the love of God, and He asks of me a service inspired by the same Divine energy. Love asks to be trusted; thrives upon honor, upon self-sacrifice; knows not the

reward sought by selfishness, and asks no price for service.

"*That ye may apprehend.*"—The revelation of Christ *in* Paul resulted in the revelation of the Gospel *to* Paul. (Gal. i, 12–16.) Christ became the interpreting key of all Scripture. With this key the Old Testament yielded new treasures. The "exceeding riches" of God's grace appears in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii, 7.) "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete [replenished, made full] in Him." (Col. ii, 9.) Paul relies upon this indwelling Christ as the interpreting principle for the entire Church. He sees no reason why Christ may not be to you what He has been to him. Divine Majesty has hitherto dwelt in the heavens, because they declared the glory of God; but in Christ Jesus the apostle traces God down into the ranks of men as a Divine energy that awakens a new vitality and reveals a new destiny. Hitherto we have thought of God as outside of a world of suffering, and far removed from the agonies of a

crucifixion; but in Christ Jesus we see God revealed upon the low level of human sorrows, sharing the cares and trials of our common manhood. At these revelations of the Christ the valleys break forth in praise, the hills clap their hands, crooked ways become straight and rough places become smooth. Mercy, as heaven's ministering angel, takes the place of sacrifice, and rejoices in her power to withstand judgment. Forgiveness is heaven's Divine message in the land of doom. Love goes forth seeking not her own, and enduring all things to bring rebellious men back to God.

The old spirit that classed the people as "clean and unclean," as "common and elect," denied to Christ the wide sweep of His redemptive power, even to the time that Peter was upon the housetop when he heard a Divine voice saying, "What God has cleansed, that call not thou common." Here Peter's eyes were at last opened to man's dignity as man, and to the knowledge that Christ is to be proclaimed a Saviour of all men down to the lowest

ranks of human depravity. Paul would have the entire Church know that the love of God is as wide as humanity; that its length spans man's life in time and eternity; that it as deep as human depravity, and as high as the Throne of God.

Paul's prayer that we may know this love of Christ that passes knowledge, seems to refer to that experimental knowledge that always surpasses knowledge gained by other processes. You may be content to know what hunger is by the dictionary, but the knowledge of experience will surpass your knowledge by the dictionary. You may get a knowledge of a parent's love by observation, but the parent's knowledge surpasses yours because it comes by experience. So you may know the love of God as a story in history, but the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit will surpass your knowledge by history.

III. "*That ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.*"

Here we reach the climax of this marvelous

prayer. It is more than a prayer: it is a revelation of God's redemptive purpose toward us; a revelation of the final outcome of Christian living. The apostles beheld the glory of God in Christ Jesus to be "full of grace and truth." (John i, 14.) We may add that Jesus reveals God in a redemptive power of light and of love. Jesus is the incarnation of these Divine attributes. Let us now remember that in Paul's mind the Church is the body of Christ, the incarnation of the same Divine attributes, and that John says that of Christ's fullness we have all received. (John i, 16.) It follows that the grace and truth and power and light and love of God in Christ Jesus all bless us with a sacred ministry. As these Divine attributes become incarnate in us we attain to the fullness of God as revealed in Christ. We may have seen the grace of God as revealed in Christ's basket, and the truth of God as revealed in His Sermon on the Mount; and the power of God in personal acts of sympathy for human suffering; and the light of God in the

illumination He cast upon the dark problems of human life; and the love of God in His sacrifice for the sins of the whole world: but it seems to me that Paul here prays that Christ as "a quickening Spirit" may be unto us a constant fountain of Divine grace; may be in us a constant inspirational source of truth; may be in us an ever-active spiritual and redemptive energy—an illuminated center, and a Divinely inspired love that will reflect the glory of God. Our infirmities may discourage us, but if we will only see that Paul is not relating impossibilities; that his goals of aspiration are revelations of our possibilities; that in his prayer there breaths the spirit of prophecy which is the testimony of Jesus (Rev. xix, 10), and that our ascent is no longer denied us by our infirmities, but secured to us by the power of God—his prayer becomes a revealed highway unto Christ's redemptive glory.

VI.

THE POWER WITHIN.

"*According to the power that worketh in us.*" —Eph. iii, 20.

Upon the 25th day of November, 1889, the crew of a schooner named *Enterprise* were trading with the natives of the Solomon Islands, a group northwest of Australia. After repeated efforts the natives induced four of the crew to come ashore in order to make purchases. Once on the shore they were surrounded by the natives, felled to the earth with clubs, and their bodies roasted and eaten. This fact alone reveals the moral depravity of those natives. Their character had been determined by "the power working in them." They were blind to all the higher values of human life. In their human victims they saw only the value that our butchers see in a beef.

The beastly power working in them had degraded manhood to this low level of cannabalism. Now, if we start there and study the gradual improvement of human life from that low grade up to the highest products of a Christian civilization, we shall find that every grade in human condition and character is determined by the power that is alive in men. A cultivated covetousness will develop the thief, and an encouraged selfishness will send the Angel of Mercy back to heaven, and degrade human conditions to the level of pure animal life. The spirit of revenge is a power. It gathers up all the energies of man's animal nature; heats his blood; inflames his speech; fires his eye; degrades his motives; banishes his sympathies. The reins of personal government are denied the conscience and surrendered to a lower impulse. Excesses are attempted and moral degredations are suffered.

Upon the background of the text we may recognize Paul's experience. He had been the victim of an evil power that had manifested

itself in hatred, cruelty, persecution, and in an obedience to "the law of sin and death." He had become the subject of a moral depravity that made his life wretched. Then by the advent of Christ Paul was confronted with a new power. At first Christ was an authority without, but later He became an inspiration within. The spirit of the life of Christ entered into Paul as a new vitality. It was a vitality of aspiration, of conscience, of moral sensibility, of faith and hope and love. As "a quickening Spirit" Christ came into the higher department of Paul's nature, blessed His life with a new regency, and revealed to him a new destiny. Himself Paul knows only in weakness and littleness; "less than the least;" weaker than the weakest, in labors and trials more abundant than they all; and yet Christ he knows as an all-conquering Power by whose aid he can do all things. Under this Divine regency Paul's life takes on a new meaning. Difficulties that seem formidable to other men are fleeting shadows to him.

The perils of robbers, of the wilderness, and of the sea are opportunities for manifestations of the power of God. Emergencies and necessities bring Paul to the border of the Promised Land, where the riches of his inheritance in Christ Jesus stand forth in new visions, and offer adequate compensations for fidelity to duty. This Divine power working in Paul redeemed him from the past, empowered him for the present, and secured him for the future.

The Sentiment To-day.—To-day we praise native talent and natural ability. We think we see our redemption in processes of evolution or of education. We rely upon our natural endowments and inherited tendencies. We would be strong in Christian virtue without Christ, and victorious against sin without the aid of the Holy Spirit. But Paul says, "I was made a minister by the effectual working of His power." (Eph. iii, 7.) To Paul our only hope lies in regeneration by the Spirit of God. It is to regenerated people that Paul is speak-

ing when he says, "Work out your own salvation because God is operative in you." (Phil. ii, 12, 13.) This divine living energy creates our ideals, molds our sentiment, quickens aspiration, purifies conscience, reveals motive and commands the will. Henceforth we will work in obedience to these quickened elements of our higher nature. With the enthusiasm of a Divine inspiration our life takes a new direction, and from henceforth our help is in God. It is only this awakened spiritual energy that sustains the man of God in his contention for right as against wrong, for truth as against falsehood, for justice as against injustice, for virtue as against vice. We first get the victory over ourselves, and with this preparation we have the promise of overcoming the world. Our mistake is in thinking that God exerts this reforming power apart from us and for the asking. We often expect God to do for us what He only does in us and through us. God revealed Christ in Paul that He might send the Gospel to the Gentiles through Paul. We

go to sleep when we ought to be awake. We do nothing but deplore immoral conditions, when we should be the instruments of an aggressive righteousness that would improve them.

Again, Paul places much value in the "gifts" that are imparted to the different members of the Church for the building up and efficiency of the entire body, but he is careful to state that these "diversities of gifts" are all made efficient by the same Spirit. The Church is to work out her destiny by means of these gifts because God is operative as a Divine energy that insures efficiency. The gifts of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, of language, of interpretation of leadership, and of service, standing alone, are as dead as a mill without moving power. It is only when Christ as "a quickening Spirit" gives vitality to these gifts that the Church begins to stir as though roused from a long slumber. With this activity of the Spirit of God at the centers of life, the gifts imparted to the Church are made

manifest in apostles and prophets and teachers and interpreters and workers of every kind. Then "according to the power that worketh in us," God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Wherefore "stir up the gift of God that is in thee," and by the help of God your life shall be a demonstration of Christian efficiency. Paul's prayer ends in this joyous spirit of hope and victory. Throughout the epistle he seems to be inspired by a revelation of opposites—man's weakness faces God's power; man's tribulation looks to God's glory; man's fellowship with the powers of darkness is contrasted with his fellowship with the powers of light; man's alienation is converted into brotherhood; man's despair of God in the world is banished by the revelations of a living and present Christ, and man's apprehensions of defeat are banished by revelations of certain victory.

An Abiding Power.—Another point too often forgotten is, that this power which has quickened us, raised us up from the death of

sin to the life of righteousness, admitted us to the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, will abide with us and remain active in us for time and eternity. It is not a power to start us and then abandon us; not a power to conduct us to the grave and there desert us; but it identifies itself with our life, and abides with us when this body leaves us by death, and will appear again as the energy of our resurrection from the dead. This all-pervading, transforming, uplifting Divinity now becomes identified with the struggles of our being, with the developments and attainments of character, but this same Divinity or power will some day carry us up into its own native realm. We may be sown in weakness, but we shall be raised in power; sown in dishonor, but we shall be raised in glory. If we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. It is by this power of Divinity alive in us that this corruptible being shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality.

VII.

THE GOAL.

"*Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*"—EPH. IV, 13.

IN the preceding chapters of this Epistle Paul confines himself to an exposition of doctrine, but here he considers the application of this doctrine to practical life. In his exposition of doctrine we saw revealed privileges and blessings, but in his application of doctrine we see responsibilities and duties. God has not revealed the goal of our aspirational life to discourage our progress, nor to cast the shadows of human infirmity upon our visions of hope, but He has supplemented revelation by gifts of power and by direction in effort

until faith secures the goal of our aspirational effort.

Again, in these appeals Paul has a sacred regard for the personality of every individual. He does not loose sight of the individual in his sight of the crowd. He does not submerge the individuality of the Church member in that of the congregation, nor does he transfer the responsibilities of the individual member to the congregation. The blessings of the Gospel are personal; heavenly heirship is personal; access to God is personal; our experiences of salvation are personal; so likewise our responsibilities and duties are personal. "Unto each of us was the grace given to build up the body of Christ" (the Church.) (Eph. iv, 12.) It follows that Paul does not address his exhortations to the Church as a corporate body, but to every individual as an important part of that body. The Church fails in proportion to the failure of each member, or succeeds as each member succeeds. The Church is the instrument by which there is a co-ordi-

nation of spiritual gifts for service for the betterment and efficiency of the whole body. As the eye receives light for the entire body, so the prophet becomes the eye of the Church. He has gone apart from the world as did Moses from the camp to the mount, and returns to report his visions of truth for the benefit of all. As the tongue is the servant of the entire personality, so is sanctified eloquence the servant of the entire Church. No man lives for himself and no man is required to die only for himself. When Jesus ascended on high He gave gifts unto men. (Eph. iv, 8.) These gifts appear in the persons of apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers and helpers, not for the purpose of honoring any one class above others, but for perfecting the members of the Church for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ (the Church).

The Goal.—This goal is the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. It would seem that faith and knowledge of

Christ is the beginning of the Christian life and not the highest point of development. There is a divergence of interpretation upon this point, and I am indebted to Olshausen for what seems to have been Paul's thought. Paul has in view that development of the Christian life by which faith and knowledge become one. The Christian life begins with faith and attains to knowledge. Faith grasps God's truth as a promise, but faith's reward is knowledge of the Father and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. (John xvii, 3.) This knowledge has its beginning and its development. Paul says, "We know in part" (1 Cor. xiii, 9), and have not already attained, but we press on (Phil. iii, 13) till we do attain. To-day I believe, but to-morrow I shall know. To-day faith is the substance of things hoped for, but to-morrow the fruitions of hope will lie in the field of our own consciousness. To-day faith is the evidence of things not seen, but to-morrow I shall see Him as He is, and rejoice in my likeness to the Son of God. Nothing is to be

reported in the field of knowledge that will contradict this Divinely inspired faith. Seeing what He had caused His disciples to believe Jesus said, "If it were not so I would have told you." Jesus is as careful in creating faith as in supplying knowledge, because they both contribute to the same end, and are blessed with the same reward.

Paul's Spirit.—In this aspirational effort in genuine sympathy Paul associates himself with the last and least person in the Church. The old Pharisee rejoiced that he was going to heaven alone, but Paul's spirit gathers up men, women, and children into one great company whose victory is assured, not by the strength of mortals, but by the power of God. Human infirmities are no longer embarrassments to be deplored since Paul can glory in his own, that the power of God may be made manifest. As we attain to Paul's spirit we rise to his revelation. At times we try to make his words interpret his spirit, but we shall succeed better if we ask his spirit to interpret his speech.

Matheson well says: "The words of a man are no revelation to thee until thou hast received his spirit. If thy spirit is not on the same mental height with him who walks by thy side, his words will be to thee as the accents of a foreign tongue. Even so it is with the words of God. The reading of all the chapters in the Bible will not reveal God to thee until they bear witness with thy spirit. Creation must precede revelation." "Behold I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you." (Prov. i, 23.) It is the spirit of a world-wide Saviour that enlarges Paul's vision, magnifies his charity, and gathers into his grasp of faith the last man, the last father, mother, and child of the Church of the living God. Jesus said that He was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, not because He loved poverty, but because He loved manhood in spite of its poverty. Jesus saw the value of manhood as the Pharisees did not. They saw men in classes as men of a certain cult or caste, but Jesus saw them as in-

dividuals apart from their class. To the Pharisee Matthew was only a publican, but to Jesus he was also a man. His class did not hide from Jesus his individuality and the higher values of his nature. This same spirit in us will reveal human worth where this world sees it not. As this spirit passes into us we shall seek less for God in the hills and the mountains and among the stars because Christ reveals that the summits of creation are in us. It is upon this summit that earth touches heaven; that Divinity meets humanity; that hope abides as the dawn of day, and that love takes on the character of a Divine attribute. It is upon this summit that justice appears with Divine authority and mercy reveals Divine goodness. Here righteousness has its law and honor its throne. Here the springs of motive become pure, and the fountains of inspiration never run dry.

Again, for thousands of years the tribe and the State destroyed their weak and killed or let die their sick. It was thought that a sick

child was a Divinely cursed child; that a sick man was a Divinely punished man, and that the infirmities of age reported our gradual surrender to demons. But here Paul's spirit interprets Christ's attitude towards human suffering, and teaches that this same spirit in us will interpret the voice of duty by some task of human service, in strengthening one brother with real genuine sympathy, or in climbing with another the hills of human aspiration, where every breath becomes a prayer; where the ministry of sacrifice turns stones into bread; where poverty is transmuted into riches; and where human applause dies away because we are blessed with the benedictions of God.

In our ordinary life prosperity attracts friends, but adversity scatters them. To prosperity selfishness is as courteous as is unselfishness, but in adversity selfishness retreats, draws the multitude from you, and leaves you to perish. At such a time unselfishness becomes heaven's ministering angel, and the Friend who stands

by you is the incarnation of a Divinity that blesses and sustains you. Paul seems to have had the richness of this relation in view when he would make any sacrifice for "the fellowship of Christ's suffering." (Phil. iii, 10.) This fellowship of suffering appears when an innocent father goes into court as the sympathetic support of a fallen daughter. It appears again when two friends walk together from the hilltops of prosperity down into the valley of adversity, the one as the support of the other. Place two men in this relation. They must each have faith in the other; must each trust the other and be true to the other. The burdens of the one become the burdens of both. Neither dare unload on the other. If there be in them any nobility, any honor, any regard for a sacred trust, here is its field. Such fellowship discovers these qualities and makes them strong. It is in this direction that Paul would have us attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

In Grecian mythology Hippolytus is repre-

sented as being the victim of intense suffering, and prostrated before Artemis, the Latin Diana. He cries out, "Speak to me, O Goddess, because I am possessed of this wretchedness." The Goddess replies, "I may speak, but it is not becoming a goddess to shed a tear." The entire scene is the pagan's picture of Divine sympathy. A God in tears was beyond their conception, but when Jesus so blended His sympathies with Martha and Mary as to go with them to the grave of their buried love and buried hopes, at the name of their brother "Jesus wept" and the Jews exclaimed, "Behold how He loved him!" It is in this range of service that we may attain to the fullness of the stature of Christ. "God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

VIII.

PUT ON THE NEW MAN.

"*No longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind.*"—Eph. iv, 17.

"*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man.*"—Eph. iv, 23, 24.

Here Paul turns from a consideration of the ideal and possible, to a consideration of the necessities of the real and present Church. It is like coming down from the mountain into the valley. He had gone to the summit, and had been enraptured with the possibilities of his larger vision. Upon this summit the ideal was the real, the attainable was the experimental. But now he returns, as did Moses, from the mountain to the camp, and reviews the necessities for an advance.

I. Henceforth living must be Christian, and not Gentile in character. It was not a strange

thing, in Paul's day, to find many who contended that religion was one thing, and moral conduct another; that if a man performed the functions of religion, at the prescribed seasons and in the prescribed manner, his obligations to Deity ceased, and he was thenceforth free to do anything he pleased. This conviction has always introduced a dangerous principle into the Church, and has forbidden its advocates an advance into the higher ranges of Christian life. Luther confronted it in his day, when his confessors refused to abandon the immoralities of social life, and produced their purchased indulgences to convince Luther that their religious life was one thing, and their moral conduct and character was quite another. In order to advance to the higher ranges of a Christian experience Paul insists upon a life of moral conduct. A man's inferior life must be brought into subjection to his superior nature; the inferior must serve the superior. Moral conduct must prepare the way for a spiritual advance. Here Paul sup-

ports his position by showing the conditions of the Gentile life that have been developed upon the low level of immoral conduct, and then by an appeal to the opposite course.

Gentiles "very Religious."—The facts that confronted Paul were these. The Gentiles were "very religious,"—carrying their religious reverences very far. (Acts xvii, 22.) Ulhorn quotes Plutarch as saying: "Sooner may a city exist without houses and ground, than a State without faith in the gods. This is the bond of union, the suppport of all legislation." Augustus required every senator, upon entering the senate chamber, to go to the altar enshrined there, and offer a libation, and strew incense. Every province, city, and village of the Roman Empire, had its protecting deity, that was honored by an external religious service, performed with a strict regard to the prescribed forms. The place, or season, or event determined what god should be invoked, and in what way and with what words, that were prescribed with the greatest exactness.

(See Ulhorn.) The service was supposed to act as a charm upon deity, and the moral character was not important. He was in greatest favor with the gods who knew best how to conduct his worship, and not the man who was pure and undefiled in heart. The results, as to moral character, are in Paul's mind. The Gentiles had walked in the vanity of their minds. In other words, their minds had been devoid of truth; the objects of their religious pursuit had been unreal; their ideals of righteousness should have been revealed possibilities, but they had been only the deceptive creations of their own imaginations. The Divine purposes of life had not been seen, and these false ideals had allured them into the hope of false securities, and then abandoned them in the land of despair. Paul then reveals the process of this moral depravity.

The First Step.—There is a voluntary blindness that is called "the blindness of the heart." We think of the heart, in the natural sense, as the seat and center of all physical life; but

Paul uses the term in its spiritual sense, as the seat and center of all moral and spiritual life, the fountain of our aspirational effort, that finds expressions, in affections, motives, thoughts, purposes. When a man's aspirational nature is awake, there is a concentration of affection, motive, thought, purpose, and effort toward the goal of spiritual attainment. This concentration is rewarded by an illumination that is denied all lower nature, and such a man lives in light, while all others live in darkness. But where the aspirational nature is not awake, the drift of life is the other way. Because his deeds are evil, this man loves darkness rather than light, and his blindness becomes voluntary. A witness has this blindness who is voluntarily ignorant. It is seen in the willful stupidity of some boys in school. It is seen in the studied misconstruction of God's Word and will. This willful stupidity closes the shutters of the soul against the light of heaven, and involves many young men in a voluntary darkness that is bitterly regretted

in old age. They remember that when they closed the shutters of the heart against revealed responsibility it was because they preferred darkness to light. The word "ought" appealed to them with an authority that was Divine, but they feigned deafness to this voice of duty and ignored its Divine authority. Then reverence for duty declined; the higher virtues—candor, honor, honesty of moral purpose and that loyalty to moral conviction that reports a man to be without guile—all suffered a serious decline.

The manner in which men apologize for obeying the impulses of their lower nature and resisting the pleadings of the reason and the conscience reveals that they once heard the voice of God and that then they closed His way of approach in order that He should not exert His rightful authority over them.

The Second Step.—The second step of this spiritual degeneration is a darkened understanding. The mind has become intensely carnal and dwells upon the lower levels of

human life. The things of God here seem foolish unto him; he can not know them because they are spiritually discerned. He may get some dictionary knowledge of God's message, but the deeper spiritual meanings that are interpreted unto us only by being translated into life he never reaches. While living in the kingdom of the flesh we can not know what life is in the kingdom of the Spirit. "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii, 11.) "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. vi, 23.) The examples of this darkness are many and exceedingly sad.

The Third Step.—The third step of this moral and spiritual degradation is into a life of "lasciviousness;" the low level of the "swamp angels" of society; the abode of the harlot, whose "house is the way to hell." (Prov. vii, 27.) "With the Jews, whom our Lord addressed,

the choice lay between God and Mammon," but in Corinth and Ephesus it was Christ or Belial." (G. G. Findley); Christ or the spirit of moral abandonment. This spirit of moral abandonment characterizes all who live in the swamp-angel district. Here moral convictions are abandoned; honor is abandoned; self-respect is abandoned; money and health are abandoned; family and the friends of virtue are abandoned because this evil spirit has enslaved these creatures "to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Eph. iv, 19.) The Temple of God is first darkened, then deserted, then defiled.

This Gentile god is in our midst to-day. He is represented in the sensuality of the theater; in the growing sensuality of our art exhibitions; in our debasing literature, and in our weak protests against harlotry. The editors of our great daily papers show that they sense this sensual demand by the large space they give to their accounts of scandal, of divorce suits, and of criminal proceedings. The more foul their character the more interesting to

the public. To satisfy this keen relish of society, our Sunday press every week sends forth train loads of this garbage upon which men, women, and children feed with greediness. This looks like a revival of animalism, a lapse of Christian civilization towards paganism.

II. From this debasing condition of society Paul turns to the Church, reminds her of her emancipation, and in all the earnestness of his nature he says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man." Here again Paul is speaking out of his own experience. We find his meaning in his Epistle to the Romans. In this sin-enslaved life he recognized the righteousness of the law; discovered his violations of the law; but his mind lacked motive power to make his conduct conform to his moral convictions. His emancipation from this bondage came by a renewal of the spirit of his mind—a transformation that made his mental vitality spiritual instead of carnal. So that while his former carnal mind was enmity

against God this new spiritual mind is in rapturous harmony with God; occupies new elevations; is rewarded with new visions of truth and new conquests of power.

Then comes an adoptive access to God where we take on the new nature, "put on the new man." When men are taken into our prisons they have their faces and heads shaved and are divested of their citizens' clothing because they have lost their citizenship. Then by hard and constant discipline they are required to put off the spirit of a free citizen and to take on the spirit of abject servitude. But when they emerge from that bondage they have restored to them their citizens' clothes, a citizen's privileges, and the gate opens to let them out into the citizens' world. At this point they are exhorted to put on the new man. Having received the garb, the privilege, and the opportunity, they are exhorted to assume the dignity, the duties, the responsibilities of a praiseworthy citizenship. But all this discipline, this humiliation, and this ex-

hortation goes for naught unless the prisoner has been renewed in the spirit of his mind. Without this renewal every emancipation of the prisoner finds him weaker; but in the power of this renewal he conquers himself, overcomes the world, and regains an honorable citizenship to the praise of God. If putting on the new man means so much for citizenship in this world, how much more is in Paul's mind when he says that our citizenship is in heaven! I leave the application with you.

IX.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND GOD.

"*The kingdom of Christ and God.*"—Eph. v, 5.

This passage arrests attention on account of its construction and because it is capable of two or three interpretations. The usual expression is "the kingdom of God," but Paul says "Christ and God," which may be interpreted to be a declaration of Christ's Divinity or to mean that the kingdom of Christ is also the kingdom of God; or the important place that this phrase occupies in Scripture may have induced Paul to write "Christ and God" in order to give emphasis to Christ's interpretation of "the kingdom of God." With the kings and priests and prophets of Israel there was an abiding conviction of a coming kingdom of God; a conviction that Divine authority would subordinate human authority; that the

kingdoms of earth would be subject to this kingdom of heaven. The sword of steel is to give place to the sword of the Spirit. The rude governments of force are to be rebuked by a government of Divine wisdom. The might of right is to triumph over the tyranny of wrong. The spirit of religious devotion now wounded by sin and enfeebled by infirmities is to see the dawning glory of a better day. Human depravity is no longer to be required to fight its battles for righteousness without the aid of the Most High God. The long and dreary night of sin is then to pass away and the glory of a brighter day is to attract mankind into the prosperities of peace. The degenerating agencies of human life are to be overpowered by Divine regenerating agencies that will transform the kingdoms of earth into the kingdom of God.

As we see events and their causes to-day it is not strange that the Pharisees of Christ's day misunderstood this inspirational life of the Church fathers. They had lost the spirit of

that life and retained only the letter. They had preserved the form, but had lost the power; they magnified the material, but were blind to the spiritual import of God's Word. Quickened by the old inspiration the aged Simeon was still looking for "the consolation of Israel" when Jesus was borne into the Temple. The Messianic interpretation of that life at once became clear to him. To him Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, the glory of Israel," and God's salvation made manifest to all people. (Luke ii, 25–32.) But when the Pharisees with their materialistic religion and their political training approached Jesus, they saw His miracles and marveled at the evidences of His power; they heard His words and admitted that "never man spake like this man;" they listened to His teaching and exclaimed, "Thou art a teacher come from God;" but with them the crucial question was, "Where is His kingdom?" All other evidences of His Divinity went for naught in absence of His kingdom.

They thought that He must be enthroned with an assumption of civil authority and the scepter of material power.

Our Lord's teaching concerning the king dom of God is His answer to this product of materialism and this delusion of spiritual dark ness. He first declares that the kingdom of God does not come in a manner to be observed by the senses. Its progress is not to be detected and measured by the eye, because it comes with no external pomp or show. Nor is the kingdom of God to be located in any geographical sense, as when you take a map and say, "Lo, here at Mount Gerizim or here at Jerusalem is the place of the king's habitation." Nor is it here or there in an ethnical sense. It is not with the Jews to the exclusion of the Gentiles, nor with the Gentiles to the exclusion of the Jews.

Again, Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John xviii, 36.) In its origin, its principles and spirit, it is related to heaven. Being Divine in origin it is Divine in char-

acter. Its principles are Divine attributes, finding a living expression in a regenerated humanity. Its glory is revealed in the triumph of justice over injustice; of truth over error; of right over wrong; of virtue over vice. It destroys tyranny and enthrones mercy; it forbids that warfare whose inspiration is revenge and encourages that warfare whose inspiration is justice or mercy or truth or righteousness or virtue.

Jesus also teaches that this kingdom is a Divine inspiration "within you" rather than an external authority over you. (Luke xvii, 21.) "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God then the kingdom of God is come unto you." (Matt. xii, 28.) Here let us not place in our mental vision John Bunyan's devil whom he calls Apollyon, and describes as a hideous monster, having scales like a fish, wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion. Nor let us think of the devil as that dire personality against whom Luther threw his ink bottle, for Mark says the devil is "an

unclean spirit," and Paul defines him to be "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." He manifested himself in Judas Iscariot as a spiritual force of this character. We shall get nearer the truth by interpreting these devils that are cast out by the Son of God to be the spirits of murder, of adultery, of fornication, of deceit, of dishonor, of blasphemy, of covetousness, of falsehood, of theft, of dishonesty, of wickedness, and of lasciviousness. Any one or all these represent "the spirit that works in the children of disobedience" and shapes their conduct "according to the course of this world." (Eph. ii, 2.) It is only as these demons are overthrown that we rise to the government and power of those virtues that have their source in Jesus Christ. When Jesus teaches us to pray "Thy kingdom come," He is teaching us to look and labor for this dominion of God in the lives of men. It is not fully come until all that is devilish in men is overcome; until all that is rebellious against God is broken down; until the whole

province of regenerated manhood rejoices in the glory of a Divine reign. "The kingdom of God embraces the entire life of man—the economic and the national, the social and the political. It includes the arts and the sciences as well as all forms of human culture and dominion over nature." (Weiss.)

Paul here sees this kingdom as a sphere of privilege and blessing into which we are admitted by Christ. The idea of authority assumes a secondary place to that of opportunity and a revealed possibility. The dominion of God is supplemented by communion with God and the inspiration of God. It used to be thought that this kingdom of God should be administered by the Church; that a materialized religion of human authority having its scepter in Rome should interpret and execute the authority of God. To this end the Church employed racks and thumb-screws and boots for torture, and stocks and torch. They made the kingdom a bondage instead of an opportunity and a privilege. They contradicted the

conscience instead of enlightening it, and denied the right of interpretation to the individual. Many good people have still to learn that a spiritual God institutes a spiritual government. It is a government of wisdom whose lack in man is to be supplemented by the wisdom of God. It is a government of a Divinely illuminated reason to enforce which God says, "Come, let us reason together." It is a government of moral conviction wrought out by the inspiration of God's presence, at which time His voice is heard, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The reins of personal government have fallen from the flesh and have been taken up by an enlightened conscience, so that Paul says, "I serve God in a pure conscience." (2 Tim. i, 3, R. V.). Here a life of moral conviction takes the place of a life of animal impulse.

Again, when Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit and they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," the kingdom of God appears, not as

the dominion of God over men, but as the inspiration of that dominion within men. Having become partakers of His Divine nature certain attributes of God become manifest in us. These are the love of God that is shed abroad in the heart by God's spiritual energy and justice and mercy and righteousness. These Divine agencies establish their government within us, so that the kingdom of God is no longer objective and an authority without, but it is subjective and an inspiration within. From this time forth God governs us, not by the coercive measures of Sinai, nor by the mandates of some human authority, nor by a Church Discipline that presumes that there is a spirit of resistance within us against the will of God, but by an appeal to the reason and to the conscience; by presenting motive and aim and object to our aspirational faculty. We are not gathered into the Church to be drilled and ruled and disciplined into obedience to human authority in order to be saved, but we come into the Church as into God's household for

inspiration to higher living; for equipment for service; for provisions of Divine grace; for direction in Divine service; for deliverance in danger; for strength in feebleness; for hope in the dwelling places of despair; for faith in the regions of doubt; for that power of God that is translated into efficiency and crown's the day with the glories of aspirational achievement. We must now think of God's kingdom as a government of mercy rather than as a government of an external authority; as a government of goodness rather than as a government of power; as a government of love rather than as a government of law. This moral government of the individual is to become the moral government of the world. The coercive element of the law fades out, and I forget my service as an obligation and think of it only as a privilege. Duties are translated into opportunities and I emerge from the shadows of the material into the power of the spiritual life. At first the kingdom of God meant the dominion of God over me; then the communion of God with

me; but now it means the inpirations of God made manifest in me. The lower forms of life enumerated by Paul have no place here, either in the world that now is, nor in that which is to come, but these higher forms of life gain a dominion in time that will be perpetuated into eternity.

X.

PUTTING ON THE WHOLE ARMOR.

"*Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God.*"—EPH. VI, 13.

No WRITER of the New Testament has such a keen sense of man's moral depravity as Paul. Godlessness and hopelessness are the lengthened shadows of an approaching night whose name is despair. Upon the other hand no writer of the New Testament more clearly sets forth the redemptive power of God in Christ Jesus. Men found "dead in sin," molded and controlled by the world-spirit of the age in which they live, are "called," "quickened," "saved," "raised up into the heavenlies in Christ Jesus," where they may live to the praise of God's glory. This kind of living is not to be delayed until we are taken to heaven, but it is to be made manifest now.

At first Paul rejoices in what God has saved us from, and then he rejoices in what God has saved us to—saved from a life of degeneration and saved to a life of regeneration for a Divinely ordained mission in this world. It is this upward vision that now commands Paul. He is addressing men who have been saved to themselves; saved to the home and the family; saved to the State and to a useful citizenship. The sunbeams of a redemptive tranquillity reveal the lingering glories of paradise and become the prophecy of a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or blemish which the Lord cherishes as a man cherishes his own life. This saved man stands before Paul's vision in the garb of a Roman wrestler, with the armor of God and the inspiration of victory. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God."

I. *Because the goal is worthy of our greatest exertion.* God might have driven us like slaves by the rod of affliction, but He treats us as the reflective and voluntary agents of a Divine purpose. Upon the assumption that we can

appreciate them, these revelations are given us to awaken reflection; to quicken aspiration; to encourage us to look for an adaptation of means to ends until we see that the possibilities of victory are more worthy of our effort than is our surrender to the peril of defeat. Someone has said (I do not recall who) that it is the material life that is crowded by necessities, made hazardous by emergencies and becomes exacting in contingencies. But in so far as a man lives out of the material into the spiritual realm he lives into the domain of a free and voluntary life. Here with the freedom of a bird's song he follows aspiration; rises into the currents of inspired reflection that carry him out of himself and into rapport with the Spirit of God. Within this voluntary life God has intrusted us with the direction of our own actions. He provides us the means of our success by giving us His own armor, not for ornament, nor for parade, but for use. The conflict is ours. God simply encourages us by revelalations; quickens us into spiritual vitality;

empowers us by the Holy Spirit; then arms us and sends us forth to combat.

II. *Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood*, but against principalities or governments; against powers; against the world-rulers of this darkness; against the spirit forces of wickedness. When Paul says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," he declares that we have not weak men as antagonists, but that our fight is against spiritual forces in which we must use spiritual weapons. If our Christian warfare antagonizes men this antagonism is against them only as they are instruments of an opposing spiritual power. As to the meaning of governments and powers and world-rulers and the spirit forces of wickedness, opinions differ. Many say that Paul here refers to the devil and his angels as the fiends of hell who "exercise dominion over the world, not in its mere material nature, but in its ethical and perhaps intellectual character and relations." (Ellicott.) Olshausen says, "Meyer pretends to fix the number of the arch-

devils. He supposes 572 of them and 7,405,-926 of the common ones." The teaching that our spiritual conflict is against one or more horrid personalities brought up from the regions of a lower world, to my mind creates more darkness than light. It directs our energies against imaginary foes instead of the real ones. In this spiritual struggle the Christian man is arrayed "against the spirit forces of wickedness." (International Critical Commentary, *in loco.*) These "spirit forces of wickedness" manifest themselves in governments, in powers and in a world-dominion of the darkness under which sinful men live. These "spirit forces of wickedness" invade the Church and the home. In the Church they create that spirit of officialism that seeks for government with power or authority. It was this spirit that created the dispute among the twelve apostles as to "who should be greatest" among them. It is the spirit that converted the pastor into a pope; the spirit that has converted great Church councils into political

conventions; the spirit that sends office-seekers into Synods and General Conferences. It converts the priest into a politician, and substitutes a religion of human authority for a religion of Divine inspiration.

Let us think of the "world-rulers of this darkness" as being those spirits or sentiments that shape the course of this world; that determine a moral or immoral tone in society; those public sentiments that form worldly customs and fashions that so many of us fear to antagonize. This world-ruler says, "When you are in Rome, do as Rome does," but the apostle of a higher Ruler says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye be not conformed to this world, but that ye be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the will of God." (Rom. xii, 1, 2.)

When Paul speaks of these "spirit forces of wickedness in the high places," I am attracted to the conviction that his reference is here to the Church. "The Lord's house shall

be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." (Isa. ii, 2.) By the apostle the Church is elevated in honor, in reverence and in dignity above all other institutions in the world. But into this exalted Church "spirit forces of wickedness" will enter. These forces will act as a deterrent power, checking advance by diverting the aspirational life of the Church. Judas Iscariot will have his imitators. Ananias and Sapphira will have theirs, and the false brethren who so much distressed Paul will continue to come into the Church. These "spirit forces of wickedness" that take on a thousand forms are more disastrous to the Church than all external oppositions or persecutions.

The Armor of God.—Paul and the Ephesians had been eye-witnesses of wrestling matches and were familiar with the weapons of attack and defense. For these reasons he uses these figures with skill and addresses them to an audience to whom their interpretation is clear.

Because this wrestle is an inward, spiritual struggle "objectified," "the armor consists of elements of faith or character or wisdom figuratively externalized." Paul here sees the Christian, not merely as a wrestler, but as an armed wrestler—that is as a gladiator. The entire context is in harmony with this view. Had he used the armor of a soldier of the army he would have mentioned the spear, and an application of the word wrestler to the soldier would be forced. A mere wrestler had no need to guard himself against fiery darts, but a gladiator did have such need and was armed for such a struggle. Paul sets forth this Christian struggle against sin as no mere pastime, but as a hand-to-hand conflict involving life or death. The Christian must conquer or be conquered; must live in victory or die in defeat.

The girdle is Truth as an element of character and a brace and support in action. Truth imparts a moral support that enables a man in dispute to hold his ground. Though "crushed

to earth" he will rise again, because he is armed with an attribute of God.

The breastplate is Righteousness—that moral rectitude that crystallizes into integrity and honesty and virtue and charity; "the seal of a pure heart and a good conscience of an unstained and impregnable spirit." This breastplate seems to have covered the body from the neck to the girdle. Its burnished surface made it shine forth with reflected light. This outward effulgence may have suggested to Paul the inward spirit, courage and strength that shines forth from every righteous life in times of trial as the reflection of the light of Christ's own life. (John viii, 12.)

The shield symbolizes Christian faith. It was covered with wet leather in order to extinguish the fire of the heated arrows that lodged in it. So faith in God is relied upon to turn aside or extinguish the fire of those wicked darts that are designed to wound and inflame men. These may be the reports of slander;

the attacks of falsehood; reflection upon moral character or the encroachments of wickedness. The Christian who is skilled in the use of this shield abides in peace until these attacks have spent their force. He does not fly to the newspaper with a flaming retort, nor place his reliance in a spectacular combat for the world to witness, nor does he hurry about proclaiming his own virtues and publishing his enemy's faults, but his secret and unfaltering reliance is in his faith. When he can say, "I have kept the faith," he can also say, "My faith has kept me."

Finally, there is the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Every piece of this armor is for defense except this. We have four weapons for defense and one for aggressive action. With this armor the Church may conquer the world upon one condition—that is found in unceasing prayer. Prayer is our telephone line that keeps us in touch with the Captain of our salvation. Over this line will come the wisdom of God for the asking. Divine in-

terpretations revealing truth and currents of inspiration that awaken enthusiasm are God's answers to prayer. In prayer our secret reliances remain unshaken; we identify ourselves with success; live out of weakness into strength; out of doubt into faith; dismiss all apprehensions of defeat, and live upon the inspirations of victory. At last, upon the summit of achievement we grasp the hand of Paul and say, "I, too, have fought the good fight and am here to receive the crown."

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